

A Night at Café Du Monde

Cafe Du Monde is a French Quarter destination for visitors to New Orleans. They serve two things: coffee, the strong, chicory-flavored variety liberally laced with milk, and beignets. Beignets are doughnut-like confections, dusted with powdered sugar, without the hole.

There is limited seating inside but most patrons prefer to sit outside on the covered patio where they enjoy a wonderful view of the St. Louis Cathedral, the Pontalba Apartments. It is perhaps the best place in the Quarter for people watching. Detective Tony Nicosia, one of the characters in my murder mystery *Big Easy*, loves Cafe Du Monde. The location exudes character and provides a pivotal scene in my short story ***Diamonds in the Night***. Here is an excerpt from the story:

From ***Diamonds in the Night***, a short story in the book ***Name of the Game***

Salty air, drifting up from the Gulf, mingled with piquant chicory-laced coffee and slowly rotting vegetation as he walked along the levee. Cold rain had ceased falling, leaving only outsized puddles on the streets. When he reached the heart of the Quarter, he found a late night, early-morning crowd milling around outdoor patio tables at the Cafe Du Monde. Because of incessant rain, the crowd was thinner than usual and Johnny T quickly found an empty table. He ordered coffee from a white-smocked waiter, and then rested his head on the table, allowing spilled sugar to dust his forehead like carelessly applied makeup.

As Johnny T. Sampson listened, music from a mellow clarinet floated through the Quarter, and shouts and laughter billowed up from beyond Pirate's Alley. He could hear the traffic clamor over on Canal Street as it punctuated muffled darkness, creating illusions of reality and allusions of transmutation. It did not matter much.

A carriage pulled by a mule with clattering hooves dropped off a romantic couple at the corner. The smiling duo, holding hands and ignoring light rain that had again begun to fall, took a table next to Johnny T. He did not notice. He just sat in silence as rain dripped down his head - rain that reflected neon's gold and purple rainbows, and sparkled like diamonds in the night.